THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The officer was considered for grant of Permanent Commission (PC) in 2001. Since he did not fulfill the minimum performance criteria for grant of PC, an order was issued for his release from service with effect from 20-02-2003, on completion of tenure of Short Service Commission. The officer challenged the release order in Delhi High Court alleging he was denied PC on account of an injury sustained in an aircraft accident. The High Court directed the Air Force to grant PC to the petitioner. Accordingly, the release order was cancelled on 18-02-2003 and the officer is continuing in service.

The Judgement is being studied in consultation with the Ministry of Law for further appropriate action.

Unidentified Aircraft

4821. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state.

(a) whether an unidentified aircraft was sighted 180 nautical miles off Chennai on 3rd February, 2003;

(b) if so, the details in this regard; and

(c) what follow up action has been taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Modernisaton of Army

4822. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Army would focus on a modernisation plan;

(b) if so, the details thereof ;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Indian commandos have suffered due to ad-hoc policies of Government :

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) how would Government equip the Indian commandos to face the threat scenario during post 9/11?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Modernisation of the defence forces, including the Army is an ongoing process keeping in view the security imperatives and threat perceptions. Some of the thrust areas of modernization of Army during the 10th plan are (i) upgradation of major combat systems of Armour, Artillery, Mechanised Infantry; (ii) improve

surveillance and target acquisition capability; (iii) enhancement of night fighting capability; (iv) upgradation of electronics warfare and information warfare systems.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Do not arise.

(e) The equipping of Commandos is done keeping in mind possible threat scenarios and operational requirements.

Training to IAF Pilots by Nato

4823. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some of the pilots to the Indian Air Force have got training skills in futuristic air-to-air refilling and "beyond visual range" combat tactics etc. from NATO;

(b) if so, the details of training that the pilots have undergone;

(c) whether Government propose to impart such exercises to its Air Force pilots regularly; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) No. Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Agni III Missiles

4824. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to test fire this year Agni III, a long range surface-to-surface missile, capable of carrying nuclear warheads; and

(b) the special features of Angi III missiles?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) and (b) Based on long-term security needs, Government has approved development of Agni-III for a range of 3000 km. The development is in progress and it is likely to be tested in near future. However, no date has been fixed for the first launch.

Inquiry into sleeping bags scam

†4825. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA :
SHRI MOTILAL VORA :
SHRI SATISH PRADHAN :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Parliamentary Committee has recommended that

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi